



Montgomery County Council

For Immediate Release

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COUNCIL APPROVES \$ 700,000 TO STRENGTHEN COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM

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The Montgomery County Council tonight approved a special appropriation of \$699,440 for mental health services, continuing its commitment to filling in gaps in the State's public mental health system in Montgomery County. The appropriation brings the total dollars available for additional mental health services to \$991,440.

The program passed tonight follows up on many of the recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Mental Health, an independent group of mental health professionals appointed by the Council which concluded that the County's mental health network had "systemic" weaknesses and depended on a "phantom network" of individual providers.

"This appropriation will help to strengthen our 'safety net' for those who cannot qualify for help under the State system," said Councilmember Blair Ewing, who chairs the Council's Health & Human Services Committee.

"I'm happy that the County Executive and the Council are going to bat for those in need," said Council President Steve Silverman. "If the State does not fulfill its responsibility for the public mental health system, we must step in."

The appropriation includes programs to:

- increase system capacity for child assessments and consultations,
- provide additional funding for laboratory and pharmacy programs,
- increase psychiatric and nursing hours at the Crisis Center,
- establish an Office of Consumer Affairs for mental health,
- open a second County center staffed by and for mental health consumers,
- bolster case management for mental health clients,
- hire eligibility workers to help clients get insurance coverage, and
- add funding for persons with unmet needs.

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